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ABSTRACT

The Competency Oriented Personalized Education Program (COPE) was developed by the Washington State University education faculty as a model of a competency-based and individualized teacher preparation program to meet the needs of a dynamic social enterprise. The essence of the COPE program is a learning model which has three basic stages: knowledge, simulation, and application. Detailed planning, program reviewing, and piloting of the program led to systematic development and a basic innovation in the teacher education program at the university. Content and process are carefully articulated so that the students who are enrolled in the program know what they are attempting to do and why they are doing it. Field experiences are provided to prospective teachers over an extended period of time so that they may have appropriate apprentice and intern level experiences. Evaluation to date has indicated that students and instructors approve of the program and that state universities may develop their own programs. Nevertheless, implementing such a program totally would require fiscal support beyond normal budgetary authorization. (Author/JA)

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THE C.O.P.E. PROGRAM AT WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

Enthusiasm, interest, dedication and commitment are the affective traits which the faculty of education desire from prospective teacher education candidates at Washington State University. These same traits were demonstrated by the faculty when the planning began for a new and exciting teacher education program. The planning was very comprehensive --more comprehensive than any other planning ever accomplished by the faculty. Students, faculty members, practicing administrators and teachers were organized into committees with the resultant action--the Competency Oriented Personalized Education (COPE) program. Our teacher education model has been piloted, evaluated and expanded to include a basic core of competencies for both elementary and secondary education prospective teachers. A major educational innovation has been initiated within existing institutional resources. Additional resources will be required for full implementation.

Description and Development of the Program

Our program had its roots established as early as 1966 when Washington State University and the Department of Education participated in a project entitled the "Multi-State Teacher Education Project" (M-STEP) partially funded under Title V of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. The M-STEP project involved students enrolled in the Department of Education in a novel field practicum experience where the essence of the program was application of learning principles. For example, after preparing perfor-

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mance oriented learning modules, a student then applied the objectives in simulated and classroom situations. Mini-courses produced for this program component were conducted in Bellevue, Washington 300 miles from our campus in Pullman. During the same period of time, especially from 1966 through 1968, the education department faculty became recognized leaders and initiators in the Pacific Northwest for teacher education. For example, a committee of faculty members at Washington State University developed the seminal plans leading to a consortium of universities which developed a model elementary teacher program. The program was competency based, field centered, personalized and systematically designed for teacher preparation. This model, entitled "ComField", proved to be a valuable resource for future planning as the Washington State University faculty continued to improve the program. As additional experiences were gained by faculty members, emerging models were analyzed in detail. Ultimately members of the Washington State University faculty of education developed a model for a competency based personalized teacher preparation program. With the assistance of public school personnel, graduate students, representatives of school districts from the state of Washington and representatives from the Washington Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the model in proposal form was critically reviewed and modified in light of the collective reactions. The model culminated in the present COPE program.

As was stated previously, COPE is the acronym for Competency Oriented Personalized Education. In our collective thinking about means to improve the teacher education program the department of education faculty supported the following assumptions:

1. Individuals vary in their learning rates and methods of learning.
2. The contact that university students have with their adult advisors should be more personal and significant than that which is afforded at registration times.
3. Teacher trainees should be provided with more and varied clinical experiences so that they may apply their knowledge with children and adolescents.
4. To work more effectively with youngsters, prospective teachers should develop self-understanding and understanding of children to a much higher degree than is commonly stressed.
5. Prospective teachers should develop and demonstrate teaching competence and not merely the competence to perform well on paper and pencil tests.

Detailed planning for the COPE program extended from 1968 through 1971. Thus, after approximately three years of intensive planning, modeling, and evaluating the program was developed. Pilot testing began with a six credit hour block of language arts courses for teachers. The basic modules for instruction were developed under an instructional team led by Dr. Frank B. May. The objectives of the program were to provide an alternative to the program which existed at Washington State University and to allow a systematic change in the department so that effective utilization of manpower, talent, and fiscal resources could be managed into the system as the system was being altered.

The COPE program at the outset consists of four major components:

The first component taken by sophomores is the Career Seminar. The Career Seminar is designed to improve student's self understanding and their

understanding of a teacher's roles and responsibilities. The seminar is oriented toward helping students answer the following questions: Should I be a teacher? Are my values, ambitions, and feelings about people consistent with the roles that teachers must play? With what age group am I most interested in working? Am I sure the specialty major which I have selected is appropriate to my personal goals and to the teaching field in general?

The second component of the COPE program is the Learning and Development Seminar which is taken during the junior year with an option to enroll in the latter half of the sophomore year. The emphasis in the Learning and Development Seminar is on understanding youngsters and the processes by which young people learn. During this seminar there is considerable time devoted to classification and clarification of personal goals and values.

The third component is a set of learning modules, most of which are taken during the junior and senior years. The modules are designed for independent study and are replacements for several of the education courses. Each module has a set of instructions to the prospective teacher. The instructions include the teaching performance that the trainee will be expected to demonstrate, some alternative learning activities which will help the trainee prepare for their appropriate performance and the means by which the trainee will be evaluated.

The fourth component is the internship program. Prospective elementary teachers may intern in two different public school classrooms for two eight-week periods during the senior year. An eight-week period may be scheduled with an alternate eight-week period on campus at which time the trainee would have the opportunity to work on additional learning modules and receive personal assistance from the professors.

The basic format for the COPE program consists of at least four levels associated with the teaching-learning act of prospective teachers. These are: (1) knowledge, (2) simulation, (3) apprentice and (4) intern. As can be noted from the previous four levels of understanding, each of our teacher candidates is expected to demonstrate knowledge of some particular task, competency, or skill. The knowledge level is then reinforced through the use of a simulation experience wherein the student may be afforded the opportunity (such as through micro-teaching) to practice the learned bits of knowledge and/or skills in a protective and supportive environment. During the third or apprentice level the student has an opportunity to participate and demonstrate competency with a micro group of appropriately aged learners. The final level or the intern level, is used to demonstrate skills with an entire class of children, all to further demonstrate learned competencies.

Field experiences within selected preservice courses are centered basically in the Pullman, Washington public schools. During the entire junior year at Washington State University students enrolled in the program have the opportunity to work directly with a teacher so that apprentice and intern competencies may be gained in an actual classroom. However, intern experiences are held throughout the state of Washington, with the interns being supervised by W.S.U. faculty members.

Previously it was discussed that students worked on learning modules on an independent basis. On most occasions it is desirable for students to work in small groups. Our modules have dual functions: one for a curriculum area and the other for an appropriate instructional strategy. For example, when learning the inquiry or discovery technique a prospective

teacher must have an appropriate curriculum area by which to practice that strategy. Thus, there is a unified theory which encompasses the entire COPE program and which remains consistent with three major facets of learning--knowledge, simulation and application.

Personnel Involved

The personnel who have been chiefly responsible for the development of the COPE program are so numerous that it would be impractical to list the names of the many professionals who participated. However, the initiator and designer of the COPE program was Dr. Frank B. May, professor of education at Washington State University. Under his planning and guidance, a team of faculty colleagues began the development of the objectives, structured the learning tasks and produced the resources to make the COPE program possible. Dr. May has been joined by Dr. Michael Balasa as project co-director. Continuous revision and improvement of all the many components in the COPE program takes place.

The Department of Education at Washington State University is subdivided into five area committees. All area committees participated in the initial development and approval of the COPE program. Further, the program was examined, reviewed and approved by the Washington State University All University Council on Teacher Education which includes a representative from every department at Washington State University having any responsibility for any portion of the teacher education program. The program also received review, critique and aid from the Education Student Personnel Committee, which includes several undergraduate education majors. In addition, it was examined intensively by graduate students all of whom were teachers and administrators, and finally by the TEPS Committee of the

Pullman Education Association of the Washington Education Association. All of the many changes, plans, and course sequencings were developed under the administrative responsibility of Dr. Frank B. May.

Budget

The COPE program was developed within the existing Department of Education budget. The COPE program has been developed through total faculty commitment--additional hours, weekends, and heavy instructional loads. To implement COPE fully, additional funding is mandatory.

Evaluation Procedures

Evaluation of the COPE program has been multifaceted. Since the program stresses positive or reinforced learning, it means that all staff members and prospective teachers must become accustomed to personal evaluation, self-evaluation and peer evaluation. All of these evaluations help to identify program components which are perceived as being strong as well as those which need improvement. At the simulation level individual evaluations and personal evaluations are prepared by staff members who have specialties in that area. Faculty advisees and seminar small group leaders meet on a personal basis with the role of the advisor being that of counselor and helper. The advisor suggests appropriate and additional learning strategies or tactics that the student may not have considered or assists the student with specific program adjustments. On the completion of each module, each trainee is formally evaluated by a method which is congruent to the learner objectives. Too, each learner evaluates each module.

All modules of instruction are reviewed each semester for content and procedural revisions. Change has become such a constant factor for im-

proving the program and trying out ideas that the faculty no longer speak about changing the program; they speak about the program as "becoming!" As was noted above, module content is modified according to student reactions, the availability of new knowledge and the relevance of issues to teaching as determined by critiques from the teachers and administrators in the field. A project sponsored by Washington State University is currently developing computer assisted instruction and computer assisted testing as a further resource for the learning modules. Dr. Michael Balasa is directing this project which uses telecommunications and electronic data processing as modes of instruction.

Several seminars have been devoted to determining the effectiveness of the COPE program. Further, Dr. May directed doctoral research in which sections of Education 304 were designated as control groups and taught in traditional large group and seminar manner. The experimental groups were taught entirely through the method of the COPE program which included individual and small group interactions. Positive results have been found from the studies indicating that while cognitive achievement between the experimental and control group was not significantly different, student attitudes were substantially more favorable in the experimental group. Evaluations by the instructors and the students in the program have indicated that the COPE program has resulted in learning which was more exciting and more relevant to the teaching act.

Evaluations during the past academic year have indicated a wide acceptance of the COPE program by students and the belief that they are now being better prepared to face the realities and responsibilities of teaching.

Secondary education faculty under the coordination of Dr. Donald C. Orlich have also developed learning modules which follow the COPE design.

Students who participate in the secondary education methods course, Education 301, are also involved in individually paced modules which include micro-teaching, seminars, and public school participation components. Student reaction to this program has been highly positive. A major research evaluation concluded that there were high positive attitudes by secondary majors.

Although the COPE program began basically as a language arts program the elementary courses for social studies, science and mathematics have been implemented in similar fashion. Beginning with the fall semester of 1972 all elementary majors receive practicum experiences in the Pullman Public Schools in addition to their simulation and knowledge activities at the University. Thus, appropriate field experiences are provided to students at the time when commitment to teaching is most important.

Improving Teacher Education

The success of the COPE program has basically been validated through faculty commitment, increased class loads and continued involvement and excitement for the program. But, how are these actions to be interpreted to mean that teacher education has been improved? The response to this question can only be inferred at this time. The COPE program planners have instituted a longitudinal study of teachers who have matriculated under the COPE procedures to determine their career commitment two, three, and four years after graduation. It is well known from research that during the first five years time approximately fifty percent of all beginning teachers quit! If we are to improve the efficacy of the program, reduced teacher dropouts would be one criterion of success.

A more subtle and perhaps more important criterion of success of the

program has been the fact that while nearly every college of education at nearly all major universities have lost enrollment, there has been a slight enrollment gain during the 1972-73 academic year in the Department of Education at Washington State University! This gain was not made by active faculty recruiting in the field, offering bonuses to students to enroll or other proselyting techniques. The gain in enrollment in the Department of Education is due entirely to student satisfaction with the program that attempts to meet their needs and faculty who continually desire to improve the program so that it can be truly classified as a model.

Although our program has been long in development, it has been successfully implemented as an on-going program; not abruptly supplanted as a program replacement. The essence of careful planning, reviewing, evaluating and pilot testing is now paying high dividends to the children of the state of Washington.

SUMMARY OF COPE PROGRAM

Members of the Washington State University faculty of education have developed a model for a competency based and individualized teacher preparation program to meet the needs of a dynamic social enterprise. The essence of the COPE program (Competency Oriented Personalized Education) is based on a learning model which has three basic stages: knowledge, simulation and application. Detailed planning, program reviewing, and piloting of the program led to systematic development and a basic innovation in the teacher education program at Washington State University. Content and process are carefully articulated so that the students who are enrolled in the program know what they are attempting to do and why they are doing it. Field experiences are being provided to prospective teachers over an extended period of time so that they may have appropriate apprentice and intern level experiences. Evaluation to date has shown that the program is successful and that state universities may develop their own programs. But to implement such a program totally will require fiscal support beyond normal budgetary authorization.